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SUBJECT: Kuwaiti Kismet: Juba's 5-Star Hotel, Port, and Fisheries Projects Touted

¶1. SUMMARY: A 5-star destination resort rises from the dusty streets of Juba. A modern port handles 15,000 tons of cargo a month while the tourists at the neighboring harbor enjoy a bite to eat and some shopping before taking a pleasure cruise on the Nile. This is the future of Juba, according to Kuwaiti development company Al-Masoud, which formed the Sudanese Kuwaiti Company (SUKAIT) and is investing over USD 120 million to make this a reality. Kuwait has long enjoyed strong relations with the south, and at a cornerstone-laying ceremony on March 11, presided over by Bahr al-Jabal Governor Clement Wani Konga, Kuwait showed its continuing commitment to Southern Sudan. A fisheries project in Terekaka, north of Juba, is also part of the development plans. The target for completion is the end of 2007 (Comment: It would be impressive, however, if the foundations were laid by 2007. End Comment.) End Summary.

A Hotel Unlike Any Other

¶2. At an event attended by both Kuwait's and Qatar's ambassadors to Sudan, the Kuwait-based Al-Masoud development company unveiled a large model and beautiful drawings that depicted a 5-star destination resort in the heart of "downtown" Juba. To be built on the site of the 1920's-era Juba Hotel, still in use but in virtual ruins, the new hotel will feature landscaped grounds, two swimming pools, an artificial lake, 400 rooms, 30 luxury suites, and 30 bungalows. Built in the Kenyan safari-style, the most distinctive architectural features are 10 towering, Olympic-flame type torches ringing the complex. The state government said it was in talks with Hilton to run the resort.

Major Port and Harbor

¶3. The port will have a capacity of 15,000 tons per month and be able to store over 500 containers. The facilities will also feature warehouses, climate-controlled storage, a fuel dock and liquid storage containers, and a dry dock repair facility for barges. Next to the port will be a tourist harbor facility with shops, restaurants, and amenities for both pleasure cruises and passenger trips to destinations like Bor, Malakal, and Kosti. The total cost for the complex will be around USD \$40 million. The port drawings and a model -- which featured little motorized cranes loading and unloading tiny containers -- showed a thoroughly modern facility built in a curvy, Miami art-deco style. Kuwait-based Al-Hamadah will provide logistical support for the port.

All This and Fish, Too

¶4. The third, and least ambitious, project was a fish processing, canning, and storage facility at Terekaka, a small village halfway between Juba and Bor on the Nile. There were no models or drawings, however, showing the Terekaka fish plant. Incidentally, Terekaka is the hometown of Clement Wani Konga, Governor of Bahr al-Jabal state.

Kuwait and Southern Sudan: Old Friends

¶5. Kuwait has a long history of cooperation with Southern Sudan. When a southern government was established in 1972, Kuwait was the first country to set up a consulate in Juba. Throughout the 70s, Kuwait was involved in a variety of development projects, including a housing development in Juba now known as Hi-Kuwait. When Kuwait was invaded in 1991, Sudan was one of the few countries to side with Iraq. At the same time, John Garang and the SPLM donated money for relief during the war and offered to send laborers to help with reconstruction. The government in Khartoum was able to prevent Southern Sudanese workers from going to Kuwait, but the ties of friendship continued. At the ceremony, the son of Muath Al-Fuhaid, Chairman of SUKAIT, also donated USD 50,000 to the children of Southern Sudan.

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